


 splash!

quick facts on...

# Conserving Water

## The Vegetable Garden

MARCH 2011

**The South Florida Water Management District** is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts.

Our mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems, and water supply.

**L**awn and landscape irrigation restrictions in place throughout South Florida allow watering on a limited schedule. Vegetable gardens are not exempt from these important water conservation measures protecting our shared water supply.

But whether growing a few tomato plants under the eaves or several rows of carrots, okra and lettuce in the backyard, vegetable gardeners can raise successful crops using less water. Too much water, in fact, can increase the risk of plant damage from diseases and pests.

Many gardeners are relying on these commonsense management practices to use water more efficiently and effectively, while also following water restrictions set by the South Florida Water Management District. Check with your local government for any other irrigation restrictions that apply to residential property in your area.

### Water Saving Tips

#### Low-Volume Irrigation:

Drip and micro-sprinkler systems can be used anytime. These systems apply water directly to plant roots to reduce the amount of water lost to runoff and evaporation.

#### Separate Irrigation Systems:

Using separate irrigation systems for the lawn and garden can save water by making it easier to irrigate only the area that needs it.

#### Portable Sprinklers:

Irrigation using a hose with an attached portable sprinkler head is allowed on designated irrigation days and times.



#### Hand Watering:

Irrigation using a single hose with an attached automatic shut-off nozzle is allowed daily for up to 10 minutes.

#### When to Irrigate:

On days when water restrictions allow irrigation, water in the morning between **4 a.m.** and **7 a.m.** This is when wind speeds and temperature are lower and less water evaporates. Watering is not allowed between **10 a.m.** and **4 p.m.**, when more water evaporates. Before watering, check the soil at the plant's base to determine if it is wet. Most vegetables need to dry between water applications.

#### Timers:

Install and use timers on irrigation systems and portable sprinklers attached to hoses. Properly set timers prevent gardeners from irrigating beyond the allowed days and times.

### Rainfall Shut-Off Device:

All automatic sprinkler systems installed since 1991 must have a rainfall shut-off device, according to Florida law. The device overrides the sprinkling system when it rains.

### Mulch:

Mulching around plants is one of the most effective ways to retain moisture and reduce water evaporation in the vegetable garden. When growing season ends, improve the soil by mixing in the used organic mulch.

### Compost:

Mix compost into your garden soil. It holds more water than sandy soil and provides nutrients.

### Rain Barrel:

Collect rainwater from rooftop gutters in a rain barrel. Use the stored water during dry periods. This low-volume watering method is not restricted.

## Water Restrictions

Vegetable gardens are included in any lawn and landscape irrigation restrictions established for your area.

Restrictions can vary geographically depending on water supply conditions. Check with the South Florida Water Management District and your local government to determine if modified water restrictions are in effect for your area. District irrigation restrictions are online at: [www.sfwmd.gov/waterwatch](http://www.sfwmd.gov/waterwatch).

These are the irrigation restrictions most commonly in place throughout South Florida.

### Seeds and New Plantings:

- Seeds and new plants can be watered without regard to restrictions on the first day they are installed.
- Plants in place from **2 days to 30 days** can be watered on **Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays AND/OR Sundays** during the hours allowed for established plantings and landscaping.
- Plants in place from **31 days to 60 days** can be watered on **Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays** during the hours allowed for established plantings and landscaping.

### Established Plantings and Landscaping:

- Residents and businesses with **odd-numbered street addresses** may water lawns, landscapes and gardens on **Wednesdays and Saturdays from 12 a.m. to 10 a.m. AND/OR from 4 p.m. to 11:59 p.m.**
- Residents and businesses with **even-numbered street addresses, no street address or that irrigate both even and odd addresses within the same zones, including multi-family units and homeowners associations**, may water lawns, landscapes and gardens on **Thursdays and Sundays from 12 a.m. to 10 a.m. AND/OR from 4 p.m. to 11:59 p.m.**
- Low-volume irrigation is not restricted.

For information about the District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program, visit us online at: [www.sfwmd.gov/2days](http://www.sfwmd.gov/2days).

For more gardening tips, visit the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences online at: [www.gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu](http://www.gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu)



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[sfwmd.gov](http://sfwmd.gov)

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### SERVICE CENTERS

Big Cypress Basin/Naples  
 239-263-7615  
 Broward  
 954-713-3200  
 Florida Keys (Key Largo)  
 305-853-3219  
 Lower West Coast  
 239-338-2929 or 800-248-1201

Martin/St. Lucie  
 772-223-2600 or 800-250-4100  
 Miami-Dade  
 305-377-7274 or 800-250-4300  
 Okeechobee  
 863-462-5260 or 800-250-4200  
 Orlando  
 407-858-6100 or 800-250-4250  
 Palm Beach County  
 561-682-6000 or 800-432-2045